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Ministry of Attorney General
and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism

BILL MAKES JUSTICE SYSTEM MORE EFFICIENT

VICTORIA – British Columbia's justice system will be more streamlined and efficient as a result of changes to legislation introduced today by Attorney General Wally Oppal.

Bill 33, the Attorney General Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, revises the Administrative Tribunals Act to improve flexibility for the temporary appointment of tribunal members. The bill clarifies tribunals' jurisdiction and discretion to decide B.C. Human Rights Code issues.

Amendments to the Family Relations Act will enable the child support recalculation service pilot project to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Changes to the Supreme Court Act and the Provincial Court Act will support the integrity of the justice system by allowing information sharing on the conduct of an employee between the chief administrator of court services branch and the chief judge or chief justice.

An amendment to the Legal Services Society Act expands the society's mandate, enabling it to provide service and assistance to individuals who currently fall outside its financial eligibility guidelines. Services and assistance to low-income individuals remain the society's priority. The amendment will permit the society greater flexibility in determining what services to provide and to which clients. It will empower the society to be a key partner in supporting the government's recently announced justice reform initiatives.

The bill also gives the Law Society of British Columbia additional tools for regulating the legal profession in the public interest. Among other changes, the amendments increase the society's ability to respond if a lawyer is practising incompetently. The bill also introduces a procedure for obtaining evidence from other jurisdictions that will streamline discipline and credential hearings.

Other housekeeping amendments include a change to the Evidence Act to clarify that electronically recorded images of documents (such as cheques) are admissible in the same way as an original.

The changes will also allow tickets for a range of provincial offences to be served to people residing outside of British Columbia and enable the mail delivery of parking violation tickets.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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